



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Tongass National Forest

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Federal Building  
Ketchikan, AK 99901-6591  
(907) 225-3101

File Code: 1950-1

Date: May 19, 2011

**PUBLIC SCOPING**  
**Bell Island Geothermal Leases**  
**Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement**  
**Consent to Lease Project**  
**Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District, Tongass National Forest**  
**Ketchikan, Alaska**

*You are invited to review and comment on this proposal. For your comments to be most helpful, we would like to receive them no later than 30 days from the date of the published notification of this project in the Federal Register. The notification is due to be published sometime during the week of May 23, 2011. We would like to hear from you.*

The Tongass National Forest/Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District is planning to prepare a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) to a 2008 programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) titled *Geothermal Leasing in the Western United States*. This effort is needed to determine whether or not to allow the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to consent to leasing the land on three parcels on Bell Island and the adjacent mainland for geothermal exploration and future development.

The project area is 7,680 acres encompassing most of Bell Island as well as a portion of the Cleveland Peninsula, on the adjacent mainland. Bell Island is located near the southeastern end of the Alaskan Panhandle; approximately 43 miles north of Ketchikan. Lease boundaries could be adjusted in the decision to avoid unacceptable impacts on sensitive resources.

**Project Location:**

Lease Number	Location	Acres (approximate)
AK 084543	Township 68 South, Range 89 East, Section 36; Township 68 South, Range 90 East, Sections 29, 30, 31.	2,560
AK 084544	Township 68 South, Range 90 East, Sections 15, 21, 22, and 28.	2,560
AK 084545	Township 68 South, Range 90 East, Sections 12, 13, 14; Township 68 South, Range 91 East, Section 7.	2,560



**Background.**

In December 2008, a Record of Decision (ROD) for the PEIS was issued authorizing only the programmatic analysis. Since the Forest Service did not propose to amend any land use plans or allocate any lands as administratively closed the Forest Service did not have a decision to issue on the programmatic analysis. The decisions for the pending lease applications were not issued and require independent RODs as issues are addressed and other compliance actions are completed (e.g., tribal consultation, roadless area).

The Tongass National Forest has not released a ROD for the Bell Island leases due to the omission of the roadless designation and the lack of public scoping. This SEIS will complement the data presented in Volume II, Chapter 11 of the PEIS, by including local public scoping and an effects analysis of lands within roadless designation. This will facilitate the Tongass National Forest to issue a ROD and comply with the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

**Purpose & Need.**

The purpose of this initiative is to update the PEIS to address compliance actions and key resource concerns not previously analyzed in Volume II, Chapter 11 of the PEIS. Chapter 11 examines whether or not three pending lease applications on Bell Island and Cleveland Peninsula are available for geothermal leasing by the BLM. The PEIS did not recognize that the lease applications are in the North Cleveland Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) 529 nor was appropriate public scoping or tribal consultation preformed. Thus, the analysis provided in the PEIS does not address actual current conditions. The Tongass National Forest must update the PEIS to analyze effects to the roadless area before making a decision whether or not to consent to leasing the land.

**Proposed Action.**

The action proposed to meet the purpose and need is for the Forest Service to provide a consent determination to the BLM to issue the three leases in the Tongass National Forest to the geothermal lease applicant, based upon the Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario provided by the PEIS Volume II, Chapter 11. The decision on this Supplemental PEIS would only be for an approving or disapproving consent determination for the BLM to issue the leases. Any future site-specific development of the leases would require further analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Two alternatives were considered in Volume II, Chapter 11 of the PEIS analysis for the project area. In Alternative A, the No- Action Alternative, the Forest Service would not issue a consent determination for any of the lease applications. For Alternative B, Leasing with Stipulations, the Forest Service would issue a consent determination for the lease applications, and the BLM would issue the leases with the stipulations identified in Volume I, Chapter 2 of the PEIS and any additional stipulations that the Forest Service attaches to the ROD.

**Issues.**

The Tongass National Forest portions of the lease sites are within the North Cleveland Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA 529), comprised of 109,639 acres. A non-discretionary restriction (roadless area stipulation) was developed in the PEIS for roadless areas on any leases with National Forest Service inventoried roadless areas. Due to a Tongass 2004 exemption to the roadless rule, the roadless designation was not acknowledged in Volume II, Chapter 11 of the PEIS for Bell Island, therefore, this restriction was not identified. Before consent to the lease application can be determined, stipulations associated with this activity will need to be identified.

### How to Comment and Timeframe.

I am inviting your comments on this proposal. Your comments will be considered and used to identify issues associated with the proposal, so please keep them as specific as possible. Your comments would be most useful if received on or before 30 days from the date of the published notification in the Federal Register. Please refer to the Federal Register at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/> for details. Enter "Tongass" into the Quick Search bar and scroll through the projects until the Bell Island Geothermal Leases project appears.

Comments may be submitted electronically to [comments-alaska-tongass-ketchikan-mistyfiord@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-alaska-tongass-ketchikan-mistyfiord@fs.fed.us). They must be submitted as part of the actual e-mail message, or as an attachment in Microsoft Word, rich text format (rtf), or portable document format (pdf) only. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed above, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will be rejected. Please put "**Bell Island**" in the subject line of your e-mail.

Comments may also be submitted in writing by mail or in person. Written comments should be sent to: Forrest Cole, C/O Linda Pulliam, Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District, 3031 Tongass Ave, Ketchikan AK 99901. Hand-delivered comments must be delivered to Linda Pulliam at Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District, 3031 Tongass Ave, Ketchikan AK 99901. Oral comments must be provided via telephone to Sarah Samuelson at (907) 789-6274. Hand-delivered or oral comments must be provided during normal business hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

There will be a public meeting on Thursday, June 2, 2011 from 3:00-7:00 PM at the Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District, 3031 Tongass Ave, Ketchikan AK 99901.

Project updates will be posted to the Tongass National Forest public website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/projects/projects.shtml>.

For additional information on this project, contact Sarah Samuelson, Tongass Mineral Group at 907-789-6274 or e-mail [ssamuelson@fs.fed.us](mailto:ssamuelson@fs.fed.us) or Carol Hollowed, team leader, at 559-920-7716 or e-mail [chollowed@fs.fed.us](mailto:chollowed@fs.fed.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Forrest Cole", written in a cursive style.

Forrest Cole  
Forest Supervisor



